a suction device in communication with the platen to draw air through the apertures; and

a valve sheet coextensive with the platen, the valve sheet including a plurality of movable shut-off elements each having a movable element registered with a respective aperture and movable between a closed position in which the element contacts a portion of the platen to prevent air flow through the aperture associated with that portion of the platen, and an open position, in which the element is spaced apart from the platen to admit air to the aperture associated with the platen portion.

19. (Amended) A method of operating a printer having a vacuum platen defining an array of apertures communicating with a vacuum device, and having a valve sheet coextensive with the platen and including a corresponding array of thermally responsive valve elements, comprising:

providing a media sheet;

passing the media sheet over the platen;

while passing the media sheet, setting at least some of the valve elements overlaid by the media sheet to obscure the corresponding aperture, and setting at least some of the valve elements away from the media sheet to maintain open the corresponding aperture.

REMARKS

This amendment is responsive to the Office action mailed February 7, 2002 for the above-captioned application. Claims 1-10 have been allowed. Claims 11